

EUROPE WITHOUT ORGANS?

Opicinus de Canistris and the New Anomos of the Earth

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Abstract

*The on-going crisis of identity of Europe is related to deep transformations of European borders. Today's borders no longer lie at the limits of territorial order. We live in turbulent times of shifting and metamorphosing of the European borders. In this critical context new geopolitical imaginaries of Europe are much needed. We argue that in our situation analogous representational crisis of Europe which arose at the end of the Middle Ages is worth examining. The collapse of medieval vision of the world, in which "res publica christiana" played the crucial part, was followed by the revolution in mapping of space with portolans, scientific cartography and secularization of knowledge. One of the most imaginative and confusing cartographer of the passage from political theology of papacy and empire to modern territorial state system was the 14th century priest, Opicinus de Canistris. Our theoretical attempt is a part of renewed interest in Opicinus' work (K. Whittington, V. Morse). We propose the analysis of his maps in the light of medieval theories of political body. Rapid social changes enabled Opicinus to combine theological and secular arguments in order to represent deterritorialization of Europe (as understood by Deleuze and Guattari). Opicinus experienced new possibilities of mapping space before Eurocentric reterritorialization of the globe took place (as described by Carl Schmitt in *The Nomos of the Earth*). His discovery of forces of immanency and free flows of desire may be of actual relevance today when spatial order of Europe passes through profound transformations of unknown destination. Deleuzian reading of Opicinus' body-worlds could contribute to deepening our imagination into cartography of the anomos, of autonomous and mobile force of migrants who cease to be organized by paradigm of inhospitable European sovereignty.*

Keywords: Opicinus de Canistris, the idea of Europe, migration crisis, autonomy of migration, deterritorialization.

The on-going crisis of the European integration provoked theorists to define it as a crisis of dealing with non-European outside which is related to the inability of finding proper modes of representation of Europe as political idea (Esposito 2018: 4-10). It has been an especially visible and urgent issue since 2015 when the so-called "migrant crisis" dominated public debate in member states of the European Union. We argue here that it was not the amount of people on the move coming to Europe that worked as a main trigger for the rhetoric about the "migrant crisis" (New Keywords Collective 2016) – in fact, the crisis narrative was caused by hegemonic spatial or geopolitical assumptions that lie behind Europe as political entity. We know from many thinkers involved in studies on the European identity that it was from the very start, beginning from Greek antiquity, organized as a part of binary, hierarchical and highly arbitrary notions: the West versus the East, civilization versus barbarism or savagery, progress versus backwardness, enlightenment versus obscurantism or democracy versus despotism (Cacciari 2015; Guénoun 2013). The borders of Europe – always unclear and unstable – played a constant, but at the same time over-changing role in establishing Europeaness/inside vis-à-vis non-Europeaness/outside. That's why the theory of Europe was homologous to the theory of orientalism – having its external Orient (Asia, the East, North Africa etc.) and internal Orient (Eastern and Southern peripheries, ethnic and religious minorities or lower classes) (Dainotto 2007).

Europe as Borderland

Nevertheless, even if the historical boundaries of Europe were always open to deconstruction, critique or transgression, for the most part of history they have delivered at least the provisional sense of fixity of the European identity. But every regime of representation of Europe is exposed to the experience of not only ordinary crisis of uncertainty but also the deeper rupture of its foundations (Whitfield 1997). It happens when the borders of Europe are not only shifting but when they change their character with the whole order of representation which maintains their temporary validity. We claim that it is highly possible that

today we are living in a phase of the one of such profound crises of acquiring the Earth and giving rational measure to it. The main reason behind our argument lies in the thesis that current moment of passage from one mode of geopolitical representation to the other – without certainty that it will ever find the new one for sure – is being provoked by deep and dramatic transformations of the borders as spatial devices in general and the borders of Europe in particular (Mezzadra, Neilson 2013: 4-9).

Today's borders lie no longer at the limits of territorial order of sovereignty (Balibar 2011: 75-104). We are living in turbulent times of off-shoring European borders to external – non-European – regions, outsourcing them to private companies, re-working them by new technologies or re-instituting them inside EU's territory (De Genova 2017). The multiplication, proliferation and differentiation of borders result in their conceptual implosion – border as an instrument of separate the inside from the outside cannot longer play its main function, liminality is not the line of division, it rather becomes the mechanism of deconstruction of any division in any place. In some paradoxical way, there are no borders of Europe anymore – Europe itself becomes a border. But it does not mean that borders simply vanish and give their way to free flows of people. On the contrary: the crisis logics behind border regimes forced them to act in even more arbitrary and oppressive way. Europe which was founded on the idea of duality between the inside and the outside, needs to re-establish its borders. On a limited scale it happens due to populist and spectacular erecting the new border walls and fences but the real come back to old sovereign notions and the Westphalian international order is impossible in the times of neoliberal globalization. That's why Europe not only re-draws its borders, but finds them anew: in detention centers in North Africa, in computer databases of Frontex agency, in biometric documents of migrants or in elastically re-inscribing liminality in spaces of flows like railways stations, highways or harbors.

This new border regime which we call, after many theorists, a "biopolitical" one (Vaughan-Williams 2017) – because it rests on the idea of separating the good life from the bad one and governing the political body in highly sophisticated, technology-driven way – is immune to representations in the traditional

cartographic realm with its objectivist, rational episteme and manifest inside/outside delineation. If the borders of Europe are changing not only their locations, but also – and even mainly – their conceptual character, new geopolitical imaginaries of Europe are much needed.

In what follows, we propose a detour to one significant epoch in the European history when analogous representational crisis of Europe provoked a fundamental shift in spatial visions of the continent and political visions attached to it. At the end of the Middle Ages when theologico-political complex of the Papacy and the Empire started to cease and when evolution of map-making and secularization of knowledge opened way to constructing new visions of the world, Europe experienced the crisis of certain similarity to the contemporary one. But before it finally found its new form of representation in scientific, objectivist cartography of the colonial, self-asserting subjectivity of “ego conquiro” (“I conquer, therefore I am”) (Maldonado-Torres 2013: 99), in the phase of passage from theological/Christian image of the world to the modern one, we could find extraordinary efforts of imagination which testified about the inability of grasping the monstrous state of decay of Europe. We propose to come back to the maps, images and writings of one of the most imaginative and confusing cartographers of the passage from political theology to modern territorial state system of sovereign powers: the 14th century priest, Opicinus de Canistris can help us understand the process of deterritorialization of Europe and the activity of mapping the space. Our reading of Opicinus’ work, inspired by philosophy of immanence of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and also by the ideas of mapping developed by Fernand Deligny, takes us to our proposition of the geophilosophy of the anomos, of mapping the European space beyond the inhospitable paradigm of Eurocentric sovereignty. Opicinus’ discovery of immanence in cartography may be relevant for current debates on the future potentialities of political immanence in Europe as well.

Nomos, anomos and the Early Modern discovery of immanence

In his book *The Nomos of the Earth* a German conservative jurist Carl Schmitt (2006) famously tracked the historical establishment of earthly spatial regime of Eurocentric origins and functions. Schmitt noted how – together with colonial domination by Western European superpowers – progressed the appropriation of the globe and how Europeans managed to invent proper spatial order (or *nomos*, in Greek: appropriation, distribution or law). Schmittian *Nomos of the Earth* rested on division between European space, composed of sovereign territorial states and non-European New World whose fate was subjugated to European international politics. But the geopolitical stabilization which Schmitt described, supported – and rather idealized – was later phenomenon than the discovery of immanence that put the medieval image of the world into crisis. The process which Mezzadra and Neilson (2013: 30-37) called “the primitive accumulation of cartography” by European colonizers and scientists should be thus treated as reterritorialization of Europe and its new role in the extended space after the shock which was provoked by prior deterritorialization of older regime of representation. The discovery of immanence – in philosophy, in art and also in politics – refers to the 13th century’s tendency to question hierarchical, transcendent and theocentric order of being and to develop autonomous forces of creation of different, emancipating reality. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000: 70-71) describes this event as follows:

In Europe, between 1200 and 1600, across distances that only merchants and armies could travel and only the invention of the printing press could later bring together, something extraordinary happened. Humans declared themselves masters of their own lives, producers of cities and history, and inventors of heavens. They inherited dualistic consciousness, a hierarchical vision of society, and a metaphysical idea of science; but they handed down to future generations an experimental idea of science, a constituent conception of history and cities, and they posed to be the immanent terrain of knowledge and action. The thought of this initial period, born simultaneously in politics, science, art, philosophy, and theology, demonstrates the radicality of the forces at work in modernity.

We can locate Opicinus de Canistris in this revolutionary social, political, cultural and philosophical context before counterrevolution reinstituted transcendent order in new circumstances. And in his works we encounter the forces of immanence which fueled his imagination and creative cartographic efforts. Opicinus can be named the cartographer of free flows of desire which penetrates the open geopolitical horizon and struggles to build networks in expanded and unknown spaces of emerging (dis)order. In fact, there are not only good historical reasons to interpret Opicinus' work in this manner – there are also theoretical ones. As long ago as in Schmitt's times he was conscious – and thrilled – that forces of disorder, which he identified with sinful and anti-Christian figure of *a-nomos*, are active before *nomos* had been introduced and maintained. What's more, the forthcoming scope and strength of *nomos* is dependent on subjugation of its outside and that is possible due to subjectivities of *anomos* like pirates, trappers or whalers who are ready to test the limits of established order and to push them further (Schmitt 1997: 13). In that process liminal agents acquire new lands and new wealth that make the enlargement of *nomos* possible. But what truly worried Schmitt was the possibility that *anomos* would emancipate itself from *nomos*, then turn against it and disintegrate the spatial order. In the late phase of his life, Schmitt (2004) acknowledged that the state lost its role of true sovereign and that's why it is unable to play traditional Christian role of *katechon* – or power to restrain forces of *anomos* (barbarians, heathens, anarchists, pirates, mercenaries or terrorists).

The pejorative meaning which reactionary thinker like Schmitt attached to *anomos*, seeing with it only wicked forces of disorder and barbarism, was turned upside down by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. French authors proposed different origins of the concept of *nomos* than in Schmitt narrative. For him, Greek *nomos* derived from territorial and sedentary order of city (*polis*), of stable division of land through borders. Deleuze and Guattari in turn linked it up to different spatial organization: an active and nomadic one. According to them, the term "*nomos*" came from Greek "*nemo*" (to distribute) or "*nomas*" (to wander), so it is conceptually related to the mode of becoming, not being (Aldea 2014). Its meaning derives not from sedentary life, but from nomadism of

shepherds or gatherers. That would mean that *nomos* is first and foremost *anomos*. But it is important here to understand that *anomos* should not be conceived as opposition to *nomos* – as its outside, anomaly, pathology or breaking the law or order. *Anomos* defines itself in autonomous way, independently to *nomos*. For Deleuze and Guattari the appearance of anomic subjectivities puts into crisis not only this or that concrete territorial *nomos*, but the idea of *nomos* as such. *Nomos* and *anomos* operate on different assumptions. Every despotic, hierarchical state machine struggles to recruit and to smash the nomadic war machine. Nomads are able to bring with themselves what Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 380-385, 410-415, 474-500) called “smooth space” which is antagonistic to every hierarchy, every social stratification.

Having made crucial Deleuzian distinctions between sedentary *nomos* and nomadic (*a*)*nomos*, between deterritorialization and reterritorialization, we propose further on to interpret Opicinius’ cartographies as the records of experiences of fissure in the spatial representation of *res publica christiana* as mystical body of Europe (or *corpus Ecclesiae mysticum*) – a fissure which is worth analyzing today when forces of *anomos* once more question another organic image of united Europe.

Opicinus and deterritorialization of Christian Europe

According to Silvian Piron, the images created by Opicinus should be seen above all as symptoms of the crisis in which Christian Europe finds itself at the beginning of the 14th century (Piron 2015). We know that on the 31st of March 1334, Opicinus de Canistris fell ill. As a result, the clergyman was partially paralysed (he could not use his right hand) and lost his memory and ability to speak for a while. We know as well that the illness was a borderline experience for Opicinus. A year later, he began to see things he had not seen before. Strictly after his conversion, Opicinus started to depict his divine visions.

For a long time, most scholars believed that these unusual images were symptoms, not symptoms of the crisis of Europe, but only of the mental illness

of Opicinus (Salomon 1962; Salomon 1936; Kris 1952). As Piron, partly also Whittington (2014) and Camille (1994), have shown, Opicinus' anthropomorphic maps show much more than the effects of mental illness of the particular, individual body. We can see on them the disease of the political body which tried to constitute itself as a permanent and hierarchical organism.

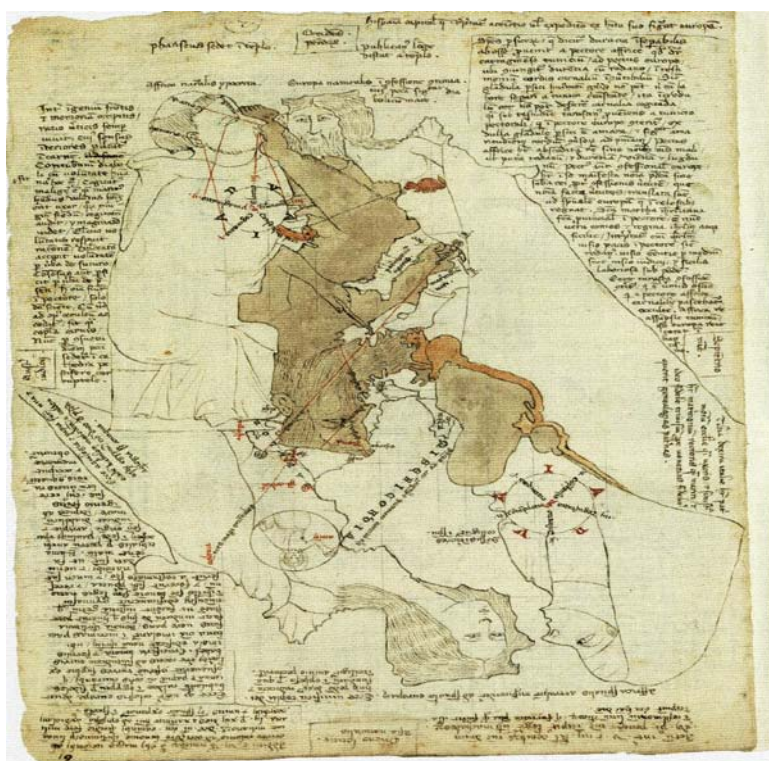


Figure 1. *Vaticanus latinus* 6435, fol. 61r. The map of Europe, Africa and Sea by Opicinus de Canistris

We should think about his notion of political body in contrast to theory of collective body which dominated at that time. It is well known that corporeal metaphors gained popularity in the late Middle Ages, as found in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury, and *De Regno* of Thomas of Aquinas. As shown by Ernst Kantorowicz (2016) and Henri de Lubac (1944) or Agostino Paravicini-Bagliani (2000), corporeal metaphors are essential for constructing the concept of the Church as a mystical political body. Also in cartography – during transition between the Middle Ages and modernity – continents, states and *res publica christiana* were often depicted as personifications of kings, queens or saints. In

the case of Europe we can mention her cartographic standard of representing Europe as *Europa Regina* (Queen Europe) – the most famous examples included Johannes Putsch's map from 1537, Sebastian Münster's version from his *Cosmographia* (1588) or the one by Heinrich Bünting from 1589. But if *Europa Regina* was supposed to emphasize the regained unity of Christendom (in the form of Habsburg Empire), its harmonious and organic geographical and political structure and also its privileged, almost heavenly location, then body played an entirely different role in the cartographic visions of Opicinus.

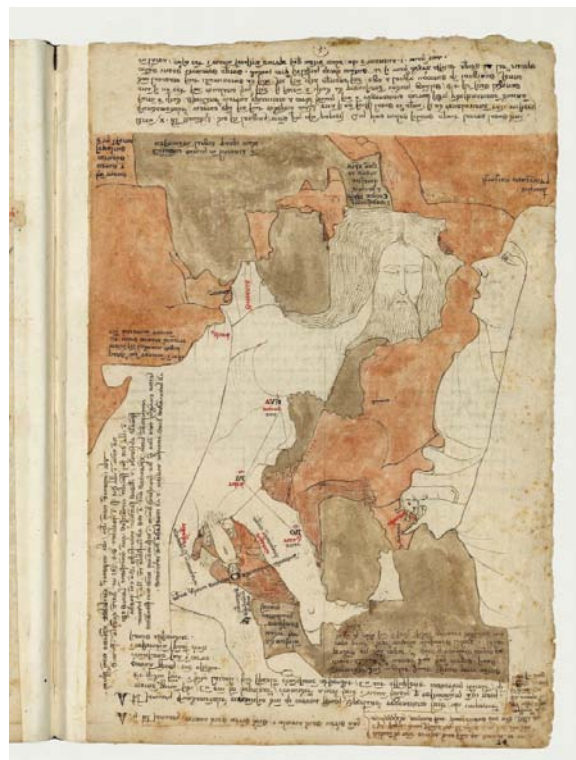


Figure 2. *Vaticanus latinus* 6435, fol. 78r. The map of Europe and Africa by Opicinus de Canistris

In contrast to theory of collective body and its later depictions by cartographers, Opicinus' maps rejected biologist and hierarchical metaphors which supported social and territorial hierarchy in the European order (prince as the head, knights as hands, peasants as feet etc.) and maintained clear boundaries of the political organism. On the other hand, the bodies from Opicinus' vision are not metaphors to organize the world. The state, the Church or Europe do not

resemble a body but simply are a body. Since it was a body, it was subject to the same changes and metamorphoses as individual bodies. That is why, when Opicinus depicted the body of Europe, he presented it as a model of his own body, with all of his lacking facilities and sickness, giving all imperfections specific political meaning. As Michael Camille noted:

For Opicinus the arrangement of pubic hair on his body signifies the arrangement of vineyards over the whole European continent. His farts and constipations warn of troubles in 'the belly of Europe' and a rheumatic pain in his arm which prevents him from touching his shoulder means the failure of a planned German attack against France. He does not recognise where he ends and the universe outside begins (Camille 1994: 88).

In Opicinus view, the political body is a body without organs, without borders, abstract norms, stable hierarchies (Deleuze, Guattari 1987: 149-166). This notion of collective body is legible if, instead of limiting ourselves to a single selected map, we follow all thirty. From this broader perspective, we can see that in subsequent representations of gender identity, gender is a subject of permanent changes (one time, Africa is represented by Opicinus as a woman; another time, Europe is a woman; the next time it is entirely impossible to determine the gender). A similar game concerns division between the earthly and the heavenly. In turn, on fol. 61 r from *Vaticanus Latinus* (Vat. Lat. 6435, fol. 61r)(fig.1), this crossing of identities seems to be the subject of one image, in which we can see mirror reflections of spiritual and carnal Europe on one side, and spiritual and carnal Africa on the other. Or when Opicinus portrayed himself as a penis of demonic Europe which is copulating with the probably heretical sea (Vat. Lat. 6435, fol. 78r)(fig.2). The deterritorialization of Europe which manifests itself in countless Opicinus' works had to be reorganized and synthetized anew under new unity by counterrevolutionary images, of which *Europa Regina* is the most obvious example.



Figure 3. The map of Europe, *Queen Regina* in Sebastian Münster *Cosmographia*

Opicinus' cartographic innovation was possible due to connection between two different traditions of map-making which he managed to establish. Two types of maps prevailed in the 13th century – both entirely different, and both serving completely different purposes. The first type of map was the so-called *Mappamundi* – symbolic maps which were never intended to guide travellers. Their goal was to present a religious image of the world, which is why the Earthly Paradise was placed in the East, and Jerusalem was placed in the centre; in turn, the representation of continents, seas, rivers or tracts, had nothing to do with reality.

The second type is the portolan maps. The oldest maps preserved to our times' came from the end of the 13th century. We do not know precisely where and when first such maps were created, and it is not clear either what methods were used to draw them. What we know is that they were shockingly accurate (very precisely reproducing the coastlines surrounding the Mediterranean Sea) and

that, contrary to symbolic maps, they had strictly practical application. We also know that a portolan map was never a finished composition: once it had been drawn, it was subject to constant changes and corrections by the sailors who used it. So, it was the work of many authors, the work of a general intellect collecting data from thousands of individual journeys, and the product of the collective work of a multitude of sailors. Although these maps were created thanks to multiple individual observations, their effect was to produce knowledge that is, in a sense, absolute or divine because it is unachievable through individual cognition. Simultaneously, the image of the world that emerges from the portolan maps is entirely different from the one known from symbolic maps. There is no Rome or Jerusalem in the centre of the map, only an empty spot in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. While the *Mappamundi* had (for religious reasons) always been oriented to the Orient, the sea maps had no permanent points of reference. This was because the shapes of coastlines were constantly changing under the influence of new knowledge but also because the maps had neither a bottom nor a top, as the sailors who used them rotated them in all directions, depending on the needs and comfort of the observer.

The difference between a *Mappamundi* and a portolan map would be analogous to the difference between cartographical and geological thinking studied by Deleuze. While the effect of portolan maps was a process of continuous becoming of the truth, the effect of *Mappamundi* was to show an unchanging, geological and "deep" meaning of reality. As Deleuze noted:

Maps are superimposed in such a way that each map finds itself modified in the following map, rather than finding its origin in the preceding one: from one map to the next, it is not a matter of searching for an origin, but of evaluating displacements. Every map is a redistribution of impasses and breakthroughs, of thresholds and enclosures, which necessarily go from bottom to top. There is not only a reversal of directions, but also a difference in nature: the unconscious no longer deals with persons and objects but with trajectories and becomings. (Deleuze 1997: 63)

The same difference was articulated by Deleuze and Guattari in pair of concepts map/tracing. As was explained by Jakub Zdebik (2012: 41):

Whereas tracing repeats, mapping shows new possibilities. The tracing generates the same through analogous repetition but a map is not something that necessarily represents what is there; it rather marks the process of discovery. What is not there originally – as in the case of cinema – grows, overflows, must be mapped anew.

How are the maps created by Opicinus placed against this background? On the one hand, Opicinus drew his images using portolan maps as the basis (Pal. Lat. 1993, fol. 5r; Whittington 2014: 25-59). On the other hand, unlike normal maps of this type, Opicinus maps were filled with religious and astrological symbols, full of political and autobiographical allusions. What is more, Africa, Europe, and on several maps also the sea, were presented as human or demonic figures. If these maps were not to be used for travel, but to create a story about the world, why did Opicinus not use the well-known formula provided for such purposes, that is to say *Mappamundi*? Symbolic maps presented a very static vision of the world. Firstly, because they were always oriented towards the East, but also because they were supposed to reflect a strictly theological concept according to which carnal life has no meaning and is only a background for the history of salvation. However, Opicinus, like many other philosophers of the 13th century, treats creation quite differently. The carnal world is an active reality, full of meanings that should be subject to constant interpretation. Opicinus believed that the truth about the world is not static. Cognition sort of resembles the travels of Mediterranean sailors, each of whom increases their collective knowledge of the world by adding further corrections to the maps (Whittington 2014). Procedural, dynamic and collective map-making which Opicinus privileged, borrowing it from naval techniques, enabled him to discover and depict forces of *anomos*.

From organic festung Europe to Europe without organs?

What could be the benefits of studying Opicinus de Canistris today, in the times of crisis of European borders? Our answer is prepared by the scholars engaged in developing autonomy of migration perspective. As Federico Luisetti, John Pickles and Wilson Kaiser (2015: 4) argue in the introduction to their co-authored book *The Anomie of the Earth*, a rising range of authors search in current migration flows and social movements the new forces of *anomos*, of contesting recent form of organic and closed European identity. Today's European Union had been criticized by migrant activists as fortress Europe which limited external migration after new phase of enlargement of the union to the South and the East. This *anomos* had been conceptualized by proponents of autonomy of migration as collective and productive subjectivity which seeks for line of flights from oppressive border regime and whose resistance and creativity forces sovereign power to invent new techniques of control and to establish new locations and new types of borders (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, Tsianos 2008). Migrants – just like sailors in the epoch of Opicinus – are involved in constructing non-representational but functional maps which open new forms of collective living that Vassilis Tsianos, Dimitris Parsanoglou and Nicos Trimikliniotis (2014) called “mobile commons”: their shared and militant knowledge is able to help to find escape routes and to imagine more fair world.

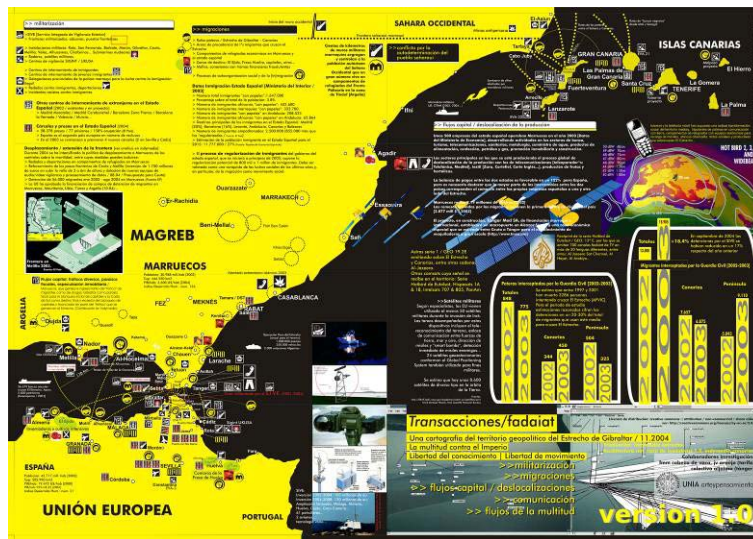


Figure 4. Hackitectura's map *Cartografía Crítica del Estrecho* (Cartography of the Straits of Gibraltar) creates an alternative understanding of the Spanish-Moroccan border region

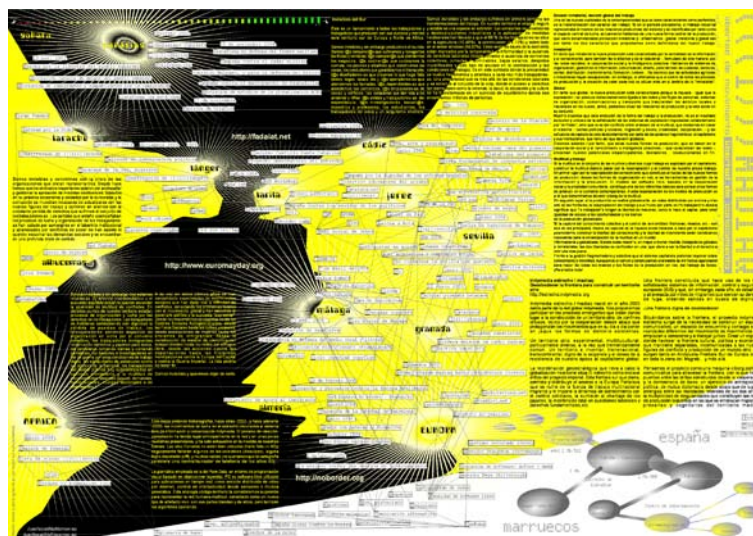


Figure 5. Hackitectura's map *Cartografía Crítica del Estrecho* (Cartography of the Straits of Gibraltar) creates an alternative understanding of the Spanish-Moroccan border region

And just as in the times of Opicinus, their embodied and mobile knowledge provokes new methods of extraction and codification of data which serves preparing the post-sovereign image of the world. Unmanned drones, satellite

photos, heat sensors and other apparatus are brought into work in order to spot, measure and represent migrant's forces of immanence. They try to trace new maps constructed by migrants and to make mimetic representations of deterritorialized movements in the service of biopower from them. Europe without organs is continuously, time and time again, grooved as more sophisticated organism which cannot suppress and block *anomos* anymore, but needs to govern and steer flows of people. It is like European body without organs which in Opicinus still served as an alternative to collective body of *corpus mysticum*, has now become a reality in which biopower tries to remain operational. This on-going struggle between map-making from the bottom up and tracing movements, between becoming-imperceptible and being captured by apparatus is going to decide which antithetic scenario would come out victorious: new *nomos* or new *anomos* of the Earth.

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